

National Mall Plan

Section 106 Meeting Notes

Old Post Office Building

April 16, 2008

NPS has added some notes in italics that provide additional clarification about issues that were discussed.

- George Oberlander [National Coalition to Save Our Mall] expressed a concern re: the plan – the White House should be considered in planning for the National Mall (NAMA)
- Susan Spain – No. The White House is outside the project scope. The White House Plan was completed in the late 1990s. There is a link to the plan on the NAMA Plan website. First Amendment rights are guaranteed there and elsewhere [in the National Park system].
- Faye Harwell (ASLA)– How is this information [re: plan scope, etc.] presented to the public?
- George [Coalition] – The NPS definition of the Mall is not consistent with historic definitions of the Mall.
- Faye – the Area of Potential Effect (APE) does include the White House? Is it in or out?
- Iris Gestram (National Association of Olmsted Parks) – What’s the status of the Capitol Planning effort?
- Susan – The plan should be completed this summer. The NAMA planning team has worked with the Capitol Master Planning effort as much as possible.
- Perry Wheelock – Clarifies that the park’s official name is the National Mall & Memorial Parks and explains the scope of the park’s management responsibilities.
- Nell Ziehl [National Trust for Historic Preservation] – Does not recommend that the NPS go beyond its jurisdiction on the NAMA Plan but suggests that NPS should provide some information on the White House Plan
- Kelly Y-Fanizzo [ACHP] - Agrees that we should bear in mind other planning efforts in our considerations but reminds the group that the APE differs from the study area.
- Nell – But we must be cognizant of the larger landscape context.

- Paul Kelsch (ASLA) – We need to show maps that describe the NAMA landscape. We should show a line that defines the historic landscape as is done for Pennsylvania Avenue. We need to show all of the historic landscape.
- Susan – We could put it on the APE map.
- Kelly – Do we need to show this as a historic property itself?
- Paul– Yes.
- Ray Saikus – When you go before the public, we need to show the historical representation of the National Mall. We need the 3rd (another) map.
- John Fondersmith [Committee of 100] – Is the separate line around the White House a NPS designation?
- Susan – The White House is a separate NPS unit. I understand that the group wants a historic base map and that ASLA wants Lafayette Square in the APE.
- Susan – The APE is [still] flexible.
- Faye – The area south of the Capitol grounds [includes] I-395 and [other] high-volume roads. The APE goes through the Pentagon parking lot and Theodore Roosevelt Island. Why?
- Susan – We needed to include the Air Force Memorial. The APE line is not entirely accurate. It should also include the L’Enfant grave site and Arlington House as well.
- George – Is there a topographical justification for the line through TR Island or at Arlington? Why is the island divided?
- Susan – We can define visible areas.
- George – [Should] all of the island be in [the APE]?
- Nancy – It’s a view looking into the NAMA.
- Kelly – Some confusion regarding the APE will remain until the undertaking [preferred alternative] is defined. This is a fluid undertaking [or process]. We may need to tweak [the APE] as the undertaking crystallizes.
- David Maloney (DC SHPO) – We generally include areas from which the NAMA is visible.

- Paul – Not just visible effects but effects in general – not just visible effects.
- Susan [to David] – Visible boundary does define widest boundary of APE. The wider the boundary, the wider the boundary, the more cumbersome Section 106 becomes?
- Kelly – Section 106 refers to both direct and indirect effects to the character of historic properties.
- John – How do you deal with issues related to existing buildings around (visible from) the Mall? Is this addressed?
- David – If we were looking at new construction in Virginia, it would affect the visual quality of the Mall.
- Ray – Technicality of definition of potential effect is too narrow.
- Kelly and Susan – The Section 106 regulations tell us what to address.
- (Add notes to APE map to explain boundary.)
- Paul – What’s the rationale for the north boundary?
- David – The discussion of APE in the last meeting pushed the boundary too far north. The [revised] line was drawn to include visual axes from the Patent Office.
- George – The White House is visible from Meridian Hill. It’s a technicality to say the WH is not part of the undertaking.
- We have to agree to disagree and focus on this undertaking. Let’s look at some other maps. All this and more will be uploaded to the website.
- Paul – To clarify – rationale for northern boundary the historic district(s)? The boundary should move to I St. to include all of the historic districts?
- Nell – Why isn’t there a historic district for the WH and the Washington Monument?
- Perry – The Washington Monument is on the National Register but the grounds are not.
- *(Note – The White House & President’s Park has a draft cultural landscape report, don’t believe it is published yet.)*

- Faye – I'm confused about the maps. How can we assess impacts without a cultural landscape map for the whole NAMA?
- Perry – We have cultural landscape inventories (CLI) and cultural landscape reports (CLR) for parts of the Mall. CLRs usually precede design and construction proposals and we're not there yet.
- Maureen Joseph (NCR Historical Landscape Architect) – We do have good documentation on contributing features.
- Tim Kerr (Latrobe Chapter – Society of Architectural Historians) – Do we have access to these [documents]?
- Susan – Here's an example (holds up document). There are links on the website.
- Faye – It's confusing to the reviewers to go back and research what the NPS has proposed in order to make constructive comments on actions.
- Perry – We are working on providing additional information on the website.
- Faye [I think] – What if we get to the preferred and one action, e.g., filling in the north end of the Tidal Basin, can't be done?
- Perry – That could happen.
- David – That's a good question.
- Faye – The point of the process is to identify these areas of primary concerns.
- Susan – Use the alternatives matrix to help inform your decisions about effects.
- Ray – What's the timeframe for the whole plan? We have to have more information and more time to review documents like the alternatives [matrix].
- Susan – We will provide ample time to review all documents. (We need comments by mid May to be able to proceed)
- Ray – We could trip up by moving too fast. The deadline is not realistic.

- Susan – You knew that when you signed on, but NPS is working very hard to provide data. We have forwarded information as quickly as caution will allow.
- Ray – I wish to state for the record that NPS is not providing materials in a timely fashion. APE maps should show important historic resources.

Break

- Susan – We're back and have a new participant, (Greta Crosby from Tourmobile introduced herself). (Susan I'm not sure who this is.) For the second half, I want to have Kelly talk about the Section 106 process and then Perry and Maureen will brief us on the critical resources in each of our areas [referring to NAMA Areas map].
- Kelly – Getting back to Ray's point relating to the process – we still don't have a preferred alternative. Once we get to the preferred, we will still have a chance to consult on the [actions] in the preferred alternative. With the maps and information provided by NPS, we need to review data and provide feedback to NPS.
- David – Based on conversation that I had over the break, I would like to propose another map that shows the critical cross-axial element of the L'Enfant Plan.
- Susan – Relating to visual connections?
- David – Yes.
- Faye – The same goes for [the] McMillan [plan].
- David – I disagree. McMillan is one component of this evolving feature.
- Paul – Re: roads – in addition to [the] cross-axis, the map should also include Pennsylvania Avenue and Maryland Avenue diagonals, MD Avenue's fragmentation notwithstanding.
- David – When the L'Enfant Plan was documented, three simple diagrams were produced to show that L'Enfant provided the essential armature – roads, vistas, connections, etc. – on which the city is based. DC developed some simple diagrams.
- David agreed to provide these diagrams to NPS for distribution the 106 consulting parties.
- Susan – We'll discuss the historic features of the National Mall. We need to keep two levels of focus – on the National Mall as a whole, and we also need to address the National Mall in components or areas to make it more understandable. Maureen will begin with the cultural landscape map.

- Maureen – Union Square – The Grant Memorial is the focus of this area. It was the site of the Botanic Gardens, some features of which (trees) remain. View zones are there (the view to and from the U.S. Capitol), as are tree panels, with Elm and other species.
- Reflecting pool dates from the 1970s. It's not a contributing feature and it eliminated some earlier features. *(Note. This is the result of the recent re-examination in the Union Square Cultural Landscape Inventory.)*
- Susan – You have some McMillan images in your packet (as well as a copy of the 1939 plan).
- Paul – Please explain the period of significance.
- Perry – periods of significance for landscapes can be very long. They evolve. The period of significance for Union Square is 1849 – 1931.
- Tim (Kerr)– Why does the period of significance not include mid-century actions? Were there actions after 1934? (or 1931).
- Maureen – No.
- Tim – Did anything occur mid-century relevant to our discussion? [Answering his own question] Looks like the answer is no.
- Maureen – Some Olmstead memorial features were moved (General Meade statue moved to Pennsylvania Avenue) and one statue was never installed.
- Perry – F.L. Olmstead Jr. and his firm had a big impact on Union Square as well as on other planning efforts.
- David – This gets to Faye's point about the need for more documentation. Union Square is not the result of one plan. It's a composite of a number of designs – this process needs to give a lot of thought to what happened here. (Referring to the evolving nature of D.C. planning and design history.)
- Faye – The overview is very helpful but we may need more detail.
- *(Note: NPS has provided a brief history and links to cultural landscape inventories and other NPS history sites. Many of these have been available online since November 2006. The Union Square Cultural Landscape Inventory has been on the planning website for some time.)*

- Maureen – Next we go from 3rd St. to 14th St. – not including Smithsonian and the National Gallery buildings and grounds – this [area] reflects the implementation of [aspects of] the McMillan Plan. Temporary buildings remained here until the 1970s then the last tree panels went in (in front of the Air and Space Museum).
- Essential elements of McMillan include tree panels, circulation patterns, viewsheds, arterials, and axial elements [?]. Internal views are very important.
- Perry – Another important axial view (4th Street) goes to John Marshall and at 10th Street the road curve in front of the Smithsonian – remains a remnant of the Downing Plan. The tree panels are essential resources of the Mall landscape and they are managed very carefully.
- Paul – McMillan (Plan) shows stronger axis at L'Enfant Square (Union Square????).
- Maureen – This may not have been implemented.
- Tom Luebke– It was manifested architecturally but circulation doesn't reflect it.
- Paul – Agreed. It's not so strong.
- Perry – Look at the 1939 Plan and you'll see how McMillan Plan ideas evolved.
- George – Are you saying that the view at Air and Space is not on the Mall? You're working with blinders.
- *(Note: NPS has repeatedly said that the Smithsonian and National Gallery museums are within the National Mall).*
- David – That's not a problem we can solve. The NPS has no jurisdiction over those museums.

(Note - Susan, George left at 2:41, shortly after making this comment)

- Roxanne Blackwell (ASLA) – Why are the Park Police stables located where they are?
- Steve L – Required for proximity to the White House.
- Maureen – Moving on to the Washington Monument – the topography is critical. The monument sits on high ground. It's an important part of the landscape [but] there are other important resources.
- Paul – What about the softball diamonds? Are these historically consistent? Is softball important? Or do we put up with it?

- Perry – The issue of active recreation is very complex in this area. It has evolved over time. *(Note: NPS is currently looking at the history of recreation).*
- Paul – What’s the NPS determination of this? Is it contributing or not?
- Perry – The rugby pitch (on the south Washington monument grounds) also is a part of this.
- Paul – Cultural landscapes map? [I’m not sure what Paul was referring to here.]
- Perry – The dotted line for the Washington Monument should go along the east side of the Tidal Basin.
- Paul – The Tidal Basin was never addressed as a separate landscape. What are we to make of that?
- Perry – Currently, it’s part of West Potomac Park. It has not been evaluated separately.
- There followed a discussion of the differences between the historic district map and the cultural landscape map. There was discussion that these needed to be clarified and made consistent *(Note: the historic districts are those districts listed on the National Register; cultural landscapes are those areas where NPS studies have been completed. They do not overlap, and they provide different layers of information.)* Maureen – On to Constitution Gardens. It was the site of WWI buildings and tennis courts. The WWI buildings remained until 1974. It is also the site of the only Bicentennial monument in D.C. It was a very hurried development. The terrace on the east side was to be a beer garden (East End Pavilion) but was never realized due to lack of funds There are important sight lines to the Washington Monument and down to the reflecting pool. There is a memorial to the signers of the Declaration of Independence.
- Perry – The lock keepers house is a remnant from the Washington Canal period. The lock keeper’s house has been moved from its original location (within 17th Street). The period of significance for Constitution Gardens has not been established yet. The end date remains in question.
- Perry – The Lincoln Memorial – The study area is as shown on the cultural landscape map. The area west of the Washington Monument (West Potomac Park and East Potomac Park) is the result of massive dredging of the river. The Lincoln Memorial features include structures; circulation systems; architecture (some co-managed with George Washington Memorial Parkway); approach ways; the reflecting pool; parallel walkways; North and South elm walkways.
- Maureen – [Also] The elms along the roadway; the circle of trees around the road; the Watergate steps; part of the Arlington Bridge project; site for concerts. Constitution Avenue used to go to the river. The row of street trees still reflects the Constitution Avenue Endpoint (bebevedere). The wall along the Rock Creek Parkway is also a feature of this landscape.

- Paul – The Lincoln Memorial is very different from what was conceived. The concept evolved. What was built is what's [determined to be] historic? To what extent was the 1939 plan implemented?
- *(Note: Yes, what is built is what is considered historic. Comparing the McMillan Plan and the 1939 plan shows that the 1939 more closely represents what was constructed near the Lincoln Memorial.)*
- Tom L – Many elements were never built.
- Paul – What's used as the record plan? [answers his own question] There really isn't one.
- Tom – Some concepts were articulated, if never fully articulated. You might see some logic in pursuing them more fully now.
- Nancy – Like the Washington Monument. (NPS concurs.)
- Perry – There is a big leap between the McMillan Plan and the SOM Plan. Part of that leap is the NPS taking jurisdiction of the Mall in 1934.

Break at 3:15

- Perry – There are several key memorial sites on the south side of the reflecting pool – The Erickson Memorial; the Korean War Memorial; the D.C. War Memorial. The D.C. War Memorial needs repair. The NPS has done a historic structure report (HSR) for the memorial. A program is in place to make repairs. The design element harkens back to the McMillan and the 1939 plans.
- Ed Fountain (DC Preservation League)– Three quarters of the American century (in terms of conflicts) are represented here [on the Mall]. His group's proposes a modest addition to the D.C. Memorial to capture WWI properly as a national memorial.
- Susan – You'll get pro and con comments on war memorials. A few public comments suggested removing all war memorials and relocating them to Arlington National Cemetery.
- Perry – As we consider planning it is important to note that The Secretary's Standards [for Treatment of Historic Properties] allow for change.
- Ray – I'm involved in memorials in Cleveland.
- Tom – Until the Vietnam Veterans' Memorial, there were no national war memorials. There is a national World War I memorial in Kansas City.
- Peter May – Doing anything to the D.C. War Memorial would trigger a violation of the Commemorative Acts.

- Nell – What does the term “completed work of civic art” mean anyway? Some pieces seem to stand alone, like West Potomac Park.
- Nancy Witherell (NCPC) – there were concerns that the demand for new memorials and museums would overwhelm the National Mall.
- *(Note: The term “completed work of civic art” was used in Commemorative Works Act legislation intended to protect the integrity of the monumental core and its open space, recreation lands, and scenic qualities. The introduction to the Memorials and Museums Master Plan provides some rationale, “The memorials and museums that define Washington’s Monumental Core express America’s connection to its past and aspirations for its future. They help us understand what it means to be an American. However, as the demand for new memorials and museums in the National Capital continues to grow, there are concerns that the unabated construction of these attractions will overwhelm the historic open space on the National Mall and surrounding area.” “The Memorials and Museums Master Plan is an effort to balance the need to protect the beauty and openness of Washington’s Monumental Core(and) will strengthen and enhance Washington’s unique character.”*
- Nell – What explains the divisions in the Mall?
- Perry – The landscape has changed, the result of landfill, changing tastes, changes in plans, changes in use patterns, etc. All of these explain these divisions.
- Paul – What’s the Reserve?
- Nancy – A law (update to the Commemorative Works Act) passed to prevent new memorials or visitor centers on the National Mall. Congress could change that again.
- Perry – Temporary war buildings were built in West Potomac Park.
- Paul – Do demonstrations differ depending on where they go, e.g., civil rights at the Lincoln Memorial?
- Steve – A lot of protest [locations] are driven by size. Big events want the money shot between the Lincoln Memorial and the Capitol.
- Ray – You can get a permit for demonstrations? How does that work?
- Steve [or Susan] – The CFR guides what can occur.
- Ray – We must consider how demonstration and public events affect historic properties.
- Perry – Public gatherings are a historic use.

- Paul – The grass panels south of the reflecting pool. Were there people there [in 1963 March on Washington]?
- Perry – No, there were temporary buildings there.
- Maureen – On to Independence Avenue – a WWI phenomenon. It was not fully developed in West Potomac Park until the 1940s as a link to the Pentagon and other government buildings in Virginia. Before the temporary buildings were put in, that space was used for recreation. Bridle paths for equestrian use evolved into bike paths. There is a long history of design development in West Potomac Park and along the river. There was an airfield once located along Ohio Drive. The 1st airmail flight departed from [or landed] there. *(Note: there is a First Airmail Flight marker listed as a historic resource.)*
- Maureen – Jefferson Memorial – A feature that was original to the McMillan Plan but modified. It was built on four acres of fill. Frederick Law Olmstead, Jr.'s design was largely implemented. It has important views to the White House but there is a lot of sound and visual intrusion from the highways. George Mason Memorial – a newer feature that embraces the water features that was already there. The Tidal Basin is operated to flush the Washington Channel. The Tidal Basin was [or is] part of the Army Corps of Engineers effort to deal with the dredged land. The Tidal Basin as constructed is historic. Any change to the Tidal Basin could be significant.
- The Jefferson Memorial was built on the beach site.
- Ray – When was the Tidal Basin completed?
- Perry and Susan – Around 1900.
- Tom L – The Washington Canal existed then.
- Tom Whitely (Tour Guide Guild) – I took a tour of the Tidal Basin years ago with a NPS person who is now deceased.
- Perry – It's well-documented.
- Meg Maguire (ASLA) – Does the NPS not consider some resources like the north part of the Tidal Basin inviolable?
- Perry – Planning is a balancing act.
- Kelly – Section 106 is intended to bring the public process into federal planning but not intended to stop all actions. It's not a veto power.
- Paul – Cites a website that identifies two original cherry trees.
- Perry – It's actually a plaque marking the location of two original trees.

- Susan [closeout] – Tasks for the group:
 1. Please go through the alternatives matrix identify actions affecting historic resources.
 2. Select dates for the next meeting.
 3. Follow up on ASLA request for a tour of the Mall.
- Again, this is a chance to shape the preferred alternative.
- Dan Feil - Maryland and Pennsylvania Avenues are not equivalent. Pennsylvania Avenue connects the Executive and legislative branches. Maryland Avenue does not.